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SUBJECT: SUDAN - ETHIOPIA'S ANALYSIS, FEARS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Michael C. Gonzales for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) The failure of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is Ethiopia's "nightmare scenario" Prime Minister Meles told Admiral (ret.) Bill Fallon, Dr. Steve Morrison from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and Acting DCM on August 13. Meles assessed that the National Congress Party will do everything necessary to cling to power while the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is weak and disorganized. If the current trajectory continues within Sudan, Ethiopia foresees the outbreak of widespread conflict throughout Sudan -- and spilling into neighboring countries -- during, if not before, the 2011 referendum. For the United States to positively influence Khartoum to engage sincerely, Meles advised, it will be critical to convince the National Congress Party (NCP) that the U.S. is not trying to force regime change, but rather that we want to see the CPA implemented and are willing to let the chips fall as they may. Meles praised the Thabo Mbeki initiative for consulting all relevant stakeholders, but argued that its mandate was issues in haste and too limited. As one cannot "solve" Darfur in isolation without considering the whole of Sudan, Meles suggested that a broader mandate for the Mbeki initiative would be critical to its success. If Mbeki asked for such an expanded mandate, Meles hypothesized that no one in the African Union would object to it. End Summary.

THE NCP WILL CLING TO POWER

12. (C) Prime Minister Meles Zenawi argued that Sudan's National Congress Party is bent on staying in power and views the implementation of the CPA as potentially loosening the party's grip on power enough to risk costing the party its control over the Government of Sudan. Furthermore, Khartoum remains convinced that the United States is intent on forcing regime change in Khartoum and "retaliating" against Sudanese leaders once they are removed from power. As long as the NCP retains these beliefs, they will not engage sincerely on addressing the issues of Darfur or the south, but once it is convinced that it can protect its grip on power, it would be willing to address these issues. Until then, having a proliferation of peace efforts or initiatives affecting the various parts of Sudan is in the NCP's interest as it empowers them to argue that they continue to remain engaged

in resolving problems, and thus these buy the NCP time to remain in power.

SPLM IN DISARRAY

¶3. (C) The Government of South Sudan lacks cohesion and is in disarray, Meles argued. The SPLM lacks leadership, and in turn "lets events determine its destiny." The Prime Minister suggested that the internal fractures within the SPLM currently mean that if it were to an active stand on something, it would break apart from within.

CPA IS ETHIOPIA'S NIGHTMARE SCENARIO

¶4. (C) In light of these dynamics in both Khartoum and Juba, prospects for the successful implementation of the CPA are very poor, the Prime Minister noted. Not only is Ethiopia bracing for the outbreak of widespread violence throughout Sudan around, or in the run-up to the referendum in 2011, but Meles speculated that the chances of that violence spilling over into the nine countries bordering Sudan is high. "The CPA is our nightmare scenario," Meles stated. Furthermore, in light of the history of "Islamic revivalist movements" throughout Sudan's history -- most recently with the Ansar movement in the late 19th century -- this outbreak of widespread violence risks triggering the emergence of another such Islamist movement in Sudan, Meles argued.

U.S. MUST CONVINCE KHARTOUM THAT IT IS NOT AFTER REGIME CHANGE

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¶5. (C) To break the current stalemate, Meles suggested that it would be critical for the United States to convince Khartoum that regime change is not part of its agenda. "As long as Khartoum believes that it must fight or die, it will choose to fight," Meles argued. Instead, the United States must convince the NCP that it wants to see the CPA implemented fully, but is willing to "let the chips fall where they may" including if that means that the NCP remains in control in Khartoum, Meles advised.

MBEKI INITIATIVE PROMISING, BUT MANDATE IS TOO LIMITED

¶6. (C) On the issue of Thabo Mbeki's initiative on Darfur, Meles noted that one of the major challenges in addressing Darfur is to reach a common definition of the issues. Instead, each stakeholder defines the issues based on their own priorities. That said, Meles argued that Thabo Mbeki and his team do have the skill and credibility with which to define the issues appropriately and this initiative does have promise in paving the way to a solution. Meles praised the Mbeki initiative for reaching out to all relevant stakeholders. Still, the Prime Minister argued that Mbeki's initiative is constrained by its limited mandate. "You cannot address Darfur in isolation," Meles argued. "You must look at it in light of the whole of Sudan." The African Union (AU) Commission defined Mbeki's initiative in haste, Meles argued, but it needs to be expanded by the AU Commission if it is to be able to address this whole of Sudan perspective. Meles argued that if Mbeki were to ask the AU Commission to expand the mandate for the initiative he leads, "no one would object."

MEECE